DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 317 338 RC 017 440

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TITLE Rural Education: A Case Study of Two Districts in Nepal.
PUB DATE Jul 89
NOTE 23p.; Paper presented at the Community Development Society Meeting (St. Louis, MO, July 23-27, 1989).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Access to Education; Attendance; Case Studies; Elementary Secondary Education; *Enrollment; Family Characteristics; Foreign Countries; Institutional Characteristics; Parent School Relationship; Rural Areas; *Rural Education; *Rural Urban Differences; Sex Differences; *Student Characteristics; *Student Participation
IDENTIFIERS *Nepal

ABSTRACT

In 1952 Nepal launched a rural development program to improve economic, social, and educational conditions in rural villages, which comprise 91% of the nation's population. This paper examines school characteristics and educational participation in two districts and discusses a national evaluation of the rural education program. Lungruppa village panchayat is an isolated area lying at 3,500-11,000 feet in altitude and containing 888 households. The first school opened in 1961, and there are now 5 primary schools and 1 lower secondary school together enrolling 441 students and employing 13 teachers. Banke district contains fertile lowlands and forest resources; modern facilities are concentrated in urban areas. Three rural village panchayats in the district have a population of 16,360 and school enrollment of 933. Analysis of variables affecting educational participation in the two rural areas found that the single most important factor was sex; boys made up 76% of the school population in Lungruppa and 91% in rural Banke. Other significant factors were child's age and contribution to family earning; caste or ethnic group; father's education, income, occupation, and attitudes; distance from home to school; ethnic similarity between teacher and student; percentage of qualified teachers; and availability of classroom space and instructional materials. A national educational evaluation in 1981-84 showed wide differences in education between rural and urban areas, and low levels of enrollment for females, particularly in rural areas. This paper contains 17 references. (SV)

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RURAL EDUCATION:
A CASE STUDY OF TWO DISTRICTS IN NEPAL

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A paper presented at the
Community Development Society Meeting
July 23–27, 1989
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RC017440

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INTRODUCTION

In "The Third World: Back to the Farm," Kristof (1985) stated:

> Rising above the splendid beaches and swarming markets in the West African capital of Lome, Togo, are a steel mill, an oil refinery, a 36-story luxury hotel, and a ceramics and brick factory. A patina of rust and disillusionment begrimes these dreams of past decades: The oil refinery is closed, the steel mill has been leased to an American, the hotel is mostly empty, and the factory no longer makes ceramics. . . The era appears to have ended. Today the watchword of development is not industralization, as it was in the 1950's, 60's, and 70's, but agriculture (1).

The great enthusiasm for development from rural society to urban industry in the 50s, 60s, and 70s turned out to be the great mistake. It turned out to be a disaster from country to country at the expense of agriculture and rural areas (Schultz, 1979). According to Professor Gillis (1985), "When a country goes full bore for industralization and has heavy import protection and the full panoply of policies that go with it, you generally get neither industralization nor agricultural development. You just get more poverty (1)." Therefore, at present, there is a call for priority to be placed on agrarian reform through "education for rural development" (UNESCO, 1982).

Land is the greatest natural resource in South Asia, and upon its use depends much of the future economic growth (Weimer, 1966). At present, population density on cultivated land is high. Low agricultural productivity, unemployment and underemployment, shortage of capital for development, and inadequate programming and planning for development are the most striking features of economy of the sub-continent. In addition, there exists a high percentage of illiteracy and a very low capacity of the rural people to take advantage of science and technology. The services provided by the government "do not reach the low income and deprived groups, either because they are not aware of the services available or do not know how to make use of the services" (UNESCO, 1982, p. 1.).

The social fabric of a community is a complexity of interwoven beliefs, values, and customs. The cultural and social factors present tremendous barriers to any effort toward social and economic development. The behavior pattern of individual villagers, their ways of life, their ways of doing things, their attitudes, and, in fact, the whole conduct of their lives are determined largely by the system of beliefs and values prevailing in their communities (Shrestha, 1982).

In addition to these problems, Nepal must contend with wide-spread poverty represented by the lowest level of per capita income, an illiteracy rate of 77 percent, overwhelming rural population of about 91.1 percent living in 28,000 villages highly isolated physically and socially, the complete absence of any means of transportation or communication, the fact that the great majority of Nepal's people live in specific well-defined geographic regions oriented more to survival than to hope and expectation, and a rigid stratified social structure are a number of problems. Its natural resources are extremely limited and most of the available ones cannot be easily harnessed because of the rough terrain and the lack of a sound infrastructure. The great diversity of the people divided into different ethnic and cultural types, and speaking about fifteen different dialects present a tremendous problem (Tucci, 1962).

The situation is complicated by a population growth of 2.66 percent a year. In this context, it is natural that education has been considered as an important and integral component of the development process by way of creating awareness among the population of Nepal. The Nepali, who possess a rich cultural heritage and who are brought up in an atmosphere of patience and tolerance, if provided with necessary education to build knowledge and

skills, can be trusted to achieve the social and economic development of the nation.

It was under these conditions that rural development became the main concept of the national development program in Nepal. The Rural Development Program was launched in 1952 under the title "Village Development Program" (Sharma, 1971). The goal of the program was to improve the standards of living of all the people. The program aimed at improving the economic and social conditions of the villages. Therefore, rural development has been considered as a movement to improve the living conditions of the "grass roots" level. It is considered to be a democratic process which includes people in self-determined, self-helping development efforts. Lastly, it aims at the promotion and sound development of all the villagers—economically, socially, and culturally.

On the basis of the above discussion, this paper will focus on the following points:

1. Describe the socio-economic and educational development of rural villages: the mountains, the hills, and the terai, the lower land of Nepal.
2. To identify child, household, and school-related characteristics that affect rural children's participation in school education.
3. To make searching inquiries about whether the present rural education is properly directed toward satisfying the present needs and future aspirations of the Nepali villagers.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF FOUR VILLAGES

Lungruppa village panchayat (Council of Villagers) has an area of approximately 50 square kilometers. The village panchayat has nine wards. Each ward is formed by one or two villages, depending upon the population density.

The village panchayat extends from 3,500 feet to the peak at 11,000 feet in altitude. The lower areas are comparatively warm in winter and hot in summer; whereas, the high altitude, especially in the winter, is very cold and hazardous. The lack of proper transportation and communication is a serious problem for villagers. The villages are not lined by any motorway road. A natural trail is the only means of travel to neighboring village panchayats (Sharma, 1984).

Limbu and Rai are the majority of people in Lungruppa. Brahmans, Chhetri, Magar, Kamai, and Damai are in the minority. The ethnic composition of the village panchayat is presented in Table 1.

From Table 1 it is evident that Limbu (44.59%) and Rai (33.67%) comprise the majority of the population, whereas Magar (7.09%), Tamang (3.15%), Gurung (2.14%), Damai and Kami (1.58%), Newars and others (0.79%) make up the minorities. Brahmans and Chhetri live in the highest fertile area of the panchayat; whereas, other ethnic groups are dwelling at the least fertile high altitude areas.

TABLE 1
Number of Household by Ethnic Group

ETHNIC GROUP	NUMBER OF HOUSEHOLDS	PERCENTAGE
Limbu	396	44.59
Rai	299	33.67
Magar	63	7.09
Brahman Chhetry	62	6.98
Tamang	28	3.15
Gurung	19	2.14
Damai Kami	14	1.58
Others	7	0.79
TOTAL	**888**	**100**

Source: Registry of Temporary Citizenship 1977, Office of COD, Lungruppa Panchayat.

There is a lack of health centers and community health workers in the village Panchay. The nearest health center is at Phidum, a whole day's walking distance from the village. Therefore, the villagers often go to Shamans for treatment.

EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

During the period before 1961 there were no schools. Children were taught to read and write Nepali script at home. In 1961 a primary school was opened through the efforts of local people and the Pradhan Pancha Naradhoj Nembang at Phejung. The school is known as Shri Shiddeshori. Between 1961 and 1972 (a ten-year span) five more primary schools were opened. Later, one of all these schools was converted for lower secondary classes. The present educational development is shown in Table 2.

TABLE 2
Number of Students and Teachers in the Schools of Lungruppa Village

NAME OF SCHOOL	NO. OF STUDENTS			NO. OF TEACHERS			YEARS OF ESTABLISHMENT
	BOYS	GIRLS	TOTAL	TRAINED	UN-TRAINED	TOTAL	
Shri Mahadev Pri Primary School	37	17	54	--	2	2	1980
Shri Shiha Sidda Primary School	34	7	41	1	1	2	1979
Shri Siddeshwar Primary School	39	11	50	1	1	2	1960
Shri Shila Sidda Primary School	52	22	75	--	2	2	1960
Shri Yubraj Primary School	46	32	78	1	1	2	1964
Shri Mahadev Lower Secondary School	125	18	143	2	1	3	1961
Total	**334**	**107**	**441**	**5**	**8**	**13**	
Percentage	**75.7**	**24.3**		**38.5**	**61.5**	**100**	

Source: Field survey data of DEP Project: CERID, 1981

Table 2 shows that girls are discouraged from participation in education. Most of the villagers still feel it is useless to keep their girls in school because they are supposed to be given to others in marriage.

This profile has given a brief description of different aspects of Lungruppa village panchayat. After going through the aspects described above, the conclusion can be drawn that the majority of Lungruppians are left far behind in modern developmental aspects. This area is least developed compared to other village panchayats.

Present conditions of agriculture, sanitation, health service, educational facilities and attitudes prevent the area from developing in accordance with the rest of the country.

BANKE

The Banke District has an area of 1879.7 square kilometers. There is one town panchayat and 28 village panchayats in this district. The southern part of the district is called the Terai, a fertile plain with a hot monsoon climate. The northern part consists mostly of forest. Therefore, forest as well as agricultural products are its main resources.

The District has a good network of roads, one airport, a new all-weather airfield under construction, 500 telephone lines, postal services, eight printing presses, five daily newspapers, and TV sets. Most of the families who live in the urban areas (well-to-do) seem to be aware of the value of education. Prosperous families send their children to school. All the modern facilities seem to be located mostly in urban areas leaving the outlying villages without anything.

The District has been making great strides in industry. Nepal Industrial Development Corporation established a branch here. The corporation has

been offering loans to various enterprises since 1973. Textile industry, soap factories, match factories, rice and oil mills are along the important industries in the district, all located in town areas.

The three rural village panchayats of Mohanpur, Fatyapur, and Hasanapur give the composition of population in Table 3.

The school participation pattern (Table 4) shows that Brahmins and Chhetris have the highest enrollment. The second highest are other caste Hindus, the Tharus fall into the third category, and casteless Hindus and Muslims are the last. Caste and hierarchy on the basis of religion, therefore, seem to be important factors in increasing participation in education. Untouchables and their children are not encouraged to participate in education.

DETERMINANTS OF EDUCATIONAL PARTICIPATION

A list of significant variables affecting educational participation is presented in Table 5. Further analysis of the variables are presented as follows (CERID/Report, 1984, pp. 175-179):

Child Characteristics and Educational Participation:

1. About 45 percent of rural school age children were found to be below the normal nutritional standard.

2. About three-fourths of the rural children were found engaged in household activities. The major household chores that the children were engaged in included looking after younger children and taking care of the home, taking cattle out for grazing, collecting firewood and grass for fodder, and carrying water and feeding cattle.

3. Only 40 percent of the rural school age children in the sampled areas were found attending school. The enrollment ratio for boys was 55.7 percent; whereas, it was only 22 percent in the case of the girls.

TABLE 3
Population Based on Ethnicity, Family Size, and Number of Children*

AREA	BRAHMINS	CHETRI	THARU	OTHER CASTE HINDUS	MUSLIMS	CASTLESS HINDUS HINDUS	TOTAL
Population	371	945	4834	4083	4183	1944	16360
Size of the Family	73 (5.1)**	178	513	723	690	293	2470
Number of the School Age Children	92	213	1161	790	926	384	3566

* The national growth rate is 2.6 percent and the average growth rate in the Terai region is 4.1 percent.

** The figures within brackets indicate average number.

TABLE 4
Position of Students on the Basis of Caste and Sex at Different Levels of School Education

SCHOOL	LEVEL OF SCHOOL						TOTAL		Total School Age Population	Percent of Students Attending School
	Primary (1-3)		Lower Secondary (4-7)		Secondary (8-10)					
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls		
Brahmin Chetri	97	30	108	6	54	7	259	43	305	99%
Tharu	158	14	102	8	12	0	272	22	1161	25%
Other Caste Hindus	115	8	86	4	20	2	221	14	790	30%
Casteless Hindus	26	4	22	0	3	0	51	4	384	17%
Muslims	24	0	15	0	8	0	47	0	926	5%
Total	**420**	**56**	**333**	**18**	**97**	**9**	**850**	**83**	**3566**	**26%**

Source: Field Observation/CERID, 1983.

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TABLE 5
A List of Highly Significant Variables Effecting Educational Participation

CHILD	HOUSEHOLD	SCHOOL
1. Sex (+)	1. Adult Education (+)	1. Percent Teachers with Similar Ethnic Background (+)
2. Father's Education (+)	2. Nepali as a Language Spoken at Home (+)	2. Percent Qualified Teachers (+)
3. Age (+)	3. Modernity Attitude (+)	3. Percent Trained Teachers (+)
4. Distance to School (–)	4. Per Capita Income (+)	4. Percent Female Teachers (+)
5. Help in Earnin (–)	5. Agriculture (+)	5. Physical Education (+)
6. Help in Househol (–)	6. Professional (+)	6. Percent Teachers with Nepali as their Mother Tongue (+)
	7. Children Earnin (–)	7. Percent Experienced Teacher (–)
	8. Labo (–)	8. Classroom Space Per Studen (–)
	9. Cottage Industr (–)	

NOTE: The signs (+ = positive; – = negative) denote the director of effect.

Source: CERID/Report, 1983

4. The apparent primary school (grade I-III) enrollment rate was 66.6 percent (1194 out of 1639 primary school age children), as compared with a 90 percent enrollment ratio for the nation as a whole in 1981. The actual age specific enrollment ratio was about 35 percent only, that is, only 610 out of 1194 children studying in primary schools belonged to the 6-8 years age group.

5. The major causes mentioned by rural children for their non-participation in schooling were: not sent by parents, shortage of labor to look after household work, poor economic condition, and the distance to school from home.

6. Of the six child characteristics, sex has been found to be the single most important predictor of educational participation. Boys have a participation rate 31 percent higher than that of girls.

7. The increment of every one year in father's education leads to increasing children's participation in education by 4.5 percent.

8. The greater the distance of school from home, the greater is the possibility of parents not sending their children, particularly girls, to school. For a distance of every one kilometer the possibility of a child to go to school decreases by 2.5 percent.

9. If children are engaged in an earning activity, their chance of participating in formal education was found to diminish by 33 percent.

10. For children who are engaged in household activities, the chance of their going to school is reduced by 9.3 percent.

11. Father's educational status seemed to have the strongest influence in the terai and the inner-terai regions where, it must be noted, girls' enrollment is lowest in the country.

12. The age variable was found to be a strong factor influencing educational participation at the primary school level.

13. The distance to school was found to have a stronger negative effect on girls' participation in education than boys' participation.

Household Characteristics and Educational Participation:

1. According to the survey data, the per capita income of the rural population is about US$ 97 (Nepali Rs 1760) as against the national per capita income of US$ 130.

2. Approximately 58 percent land-owning householders had at least one of their school-age children receiving school education; whereas, 73 percent of the landless households did not have any of their school-age children attending school.

3. About 30 percent of the rural adults in the sampled regions were found to be literate.

4. Of the thirteen selected household characteristics, the average educational status of the adults in the family was found to be the strongest predictor of rural children's educational participation.

5. The household head's receptivity towards modernization has been found to have a strong bearing on his children's educational participation.

6. A child who speaks Nepali at home has a greater chance of participation in education than one who speaks a language other than Nepali at home. In a region-wise analysis, however, this finding has proved to be true only in the case of the hills.

7. The greater the income a family has, the greater the chances are for the children in that family to join school.

8. Two major occupations—cottage industry and labor—of the rural households, especially in the hills and the terai, were found to have adversely effected children's participation in education.

9. If one or more adults in the household being engaged in professional or non-professional jobs had a significant effect on educational participation at the secondary school level.

10. A professional job as a household occupation was found to have significantly and positively affected girls' participation in education.

School Characteristics and Educational Participation:

1. Seventy-three percent of primary school teachers and 56 percent of secondary school teachers (including lower-secondary level) were found to possess the required qualifications for the level they were teaching and as regards trained teachers, only 42 percent of the primary level and 50 percent of the secondary level teachers were trained.

2. Forty-six percent of the schools surveyed under the study did not have adequate space for all the classrooms. Most of the schools did not have rooms for teachers, libraries, laboratories, and workshops.

3. Few primary schools had sufficient charts and maps for instructional purposes, and fewer still had any materials for games and sports.

4. The unit cost or per pupil cost of school level education was found to be Rs.130 (about US$ 71) at the primary, and Rs.273 (about US$ 15) at the secondary level.

5. Among the selected school characteristics, the ethnic similarity between the teacher and the students was found to be most strongly associated with educational participation. However, as the

regional-wise analysis indicated, this is true only in the case of the hills region. It has even a slight negative effect on participation by rural children in the terai region.

6. The proportion of qualified and trained teachers in a school has been found to have a strong positive effect on educational participation.

7. The availability of instructional materials in schools had a significant positive effect on educational participation.

ANALYSIS

It is very difficult to give a total quantitative assessment of the achievement of the rural education program in Nepal. Periodic evaluation or instruction of the planning program is entirely lacking. Earlier evaluation of the program by the government and private agencies were inadequate and contradictory. The first systematic evaluation on a national level was conducted by Research Center for Educational Innovation and Development Tribuban University. More than 4,600 school-age children and over 2,300 households were presented in the sample. The study took three years before it was completed in 1984. The study indicated that:

1. A large number of rural school-age children do not participate in education. As many as 53 percent (1980 figures) of primary school enrollees were found to drop out or repeat the grade.

   A grade three completer could reach the achievement level of grade two only.

2. Government in three decades of earnest efforts to provide facilities for increasing access to education for all school-age children irrespective of caste, creed, sex, and race in rural areas have met with limited success.

3. Wide differences exist in the equitable development of education in the rural areas for reasons of geographical and climatic variations: traditional views of various cultural groups of people, and socio-economic disparaties.

4. Wide imbalance exists in the quality of teaching in the urban and rural areas. There are greater facilities in terms of teachers, schools, and teaching materials in urban areas as compared to rural areas. The elite and affluent families go to private schools. Inequality in

income and wealth gradually lead towards increasing divergence in educational standards especially in the rural areas.

5. Enrollment of females is comparatively lower at all levels of education in rural areas. The low participation of females, especially in the rural areas, is due to prejudicial views held through the ages by the people that education for daughters is not necessary. Girls are needed at home most for taking care of babies and helping with household work.

CONCLUSION

It is imperative that the stability of any government, democratic or autocratic, and the maintenance of social order depends to a large extent on the ability of the government to improve social and economic conditions and to raise the standard of living of the majority of the people. The fact that 91.1 percent of the people in Nepal live in rural villages—and these people comprise the bulk of the population—has to be realized by the planners of Nepal. In the second place, it is necessary that the planners of Nepal face the hard fact that the Rural Development Program is not making enough progress to avoid disaster in the long-run, and perhaps in the short-run. It is time to recognize the fact that the income gap between rich and poor is widening. It is time to recognize that the real beneficiaries of any economic achievement should be the large majority—the rural people.

Thirdly, since it is the rural people who comprise the bulk of the population, the Rural Development Program should correspond to their basic needs. The program should deal with their problems; should aim at utilizing fully local resources such as manpower, material, talent, and leadership (Chang, 1969); it must emphasize permanent improvements that will build the people's capacity and confidence in themselves; it must distribute benefits evenly over the community; it should reduce the economic and social disparities that exist between the different classes and castes of the

community; and the active participation of the local people in the program activities should be encouraged.

Fourthly, rural development under the Panchayat aims to bring a "mental and spiritual regeneration of the people; to remove the centuries old poverty, ignorance, and backwardness;" and to build a new democracy "gradually layer by layer from the bottom upwards" (Royal Message, 1961, p. 17-26). If these ideas are to be reached, the Rural Development Program under Panchayat can provide the only road, and the only vehicle to reach the village people—to understand them, to convince them, to reorient them, to develop them, and to uplift them socially, economically, and culturally. The present system (Panchayat) because of its bureaucratic nature, is less oriented towards development goals. By and large, the bureaucracy exists to protect the interest of a few. Appointments to the higher services are largely based on favoritism rather than on merit. Family and political connections advance careers and bribery and corruption are increasing and political pressure increasingly conditions administrative decision-making. As such, the state of rural economy itself has been a brake on development.

Nepal is now in a state of crisis, fundamentally rooted in a failure of productive organization with its economic and political underdevelopment (Blaikie, Piers, & Cameron, 1980). The crisis is visible in the form of soil erosion, landslides, neglect of education for rural children, and widespread deficiencies in diet, shelter, and clothing for the rural poor who comprise the majority. All these problems have been little affected by the rhetoric of development by the bureaucratic government financed largely by the foreign aid. Furthermore, "rural development," both education and economic, has been intended to reach only the rich. The small peasants who actually produce most of the food supply to support the whole population been

rendered functionally invisible and kept illiterate. According to Susan George (1977), "government (Third World) which today seems indefectibly bound to western interests may one day decide—pushed by their own masses—that enough is enough" (106). This indicates that the planners of Nepal should realize that the rural poor have been carrying out research on their own, and one day they might decide that enough is enough. Thus, the objectives, aims, and concepts of rural development need change. If not, the planners of Nepal shall have a real revolution on their hands.

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